



State of Connecticut
Department of Higher Education

Testimony by the Connecticut Department of Higher Education
Before the Education Committee
3:30 p.m. – LOB Room 1E
March 1, 2010

Senate Bill 275 (Raised) An Act Concerning Staff Qualifications for School Readiness Programs for 2015

The Department of Higher Education supports without reservation Raised Bill No. 275.

This bill raises the standard for teachers of young children in Connecticut.

- **Raised Bill 275 sets a standard which will result in raising the qualifications and competencies of early childhood teachers in state funded preschool programs.**
- **Current standard:** less than a college degree
Currently early childhood teachers in state-funded School Readiness programs and DSS Child Care Centers are required to have a minimum of a CDA credential and 12 college credits (4 college courses).
- **Proposed standard:** College degree and skills as an early childhood teacher
The standard proposed in Raised Bill 275 will require teachers in these programs to have a college degree by 2015 AND will allow us to require that these individuals meet a competency-based standard.
 - By 2015 these teachers must hold an associate's or a bachelor's degree from an approved competency-based higher education program. A minimum of 50% of teachers in each program must have a bachelor's and the remaining teachers must have an associates degree (50/50 requirement).
 - Individuals graduating from these approved programs would also earn an Early Childhood Teacher Credential (ECTC) as documentation of meeting this competency-based standard.

PA 05-245 Standard is not possible: All bachelor's teachers by 2015 is unachievable

- Public Act 05-245 requires School Readiness teachers to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree by 2015. Currently less than a third of these teachers hold a bachelor's degree.
- In 2009 the Department of Higher Education conducted an analysis and determined that it would not be possible to meet the bachelor's by 2015 standard either by raising the qualifications of the current workforce or by preparing new bachelor's level early childhood teachers, or both. The time required for students to complete bachelor's degrees makes the 2015 goal unattainable.

Raised Bill 275 will allow us to set a high standard based on competencies by 2015

- By holding higher education institutions accountable to a competency-based standard we can ensure that graduates of both associates and bachelor's degree programs have the competencies required to teach young children.
- The Departments of Higher Education and Education have committed to implementing a competency-based early childhood teacher credential (ECTC) which is tied to a higher education program approval process.
- This outcome or competency-based process actually provides better assurance of a highly qualified early childhood workforce than called for in Public Act 05-245.

Raised Bill 275 reflects current research and national policies

- The 50/50 requirement is the standard that has been set by the federal government for Head Start (by 2013) and by the professional organization (National Association for the Education of Young Children) for accreditation of programs for young children (by 2015).
- We have a growing body of research on the competencies teachers need to be effective in early childhood classrooms (i.e., Pianta and Howes, 2009) and college degrees alone do not ensure that individuals have these competencies.
- National experts, including Connecticut resident Lynn Kagan (Professor of Early Childhood and Family Policy at Teachers College, Columbia University) have called for a national early childhood credential. In her recent book* Dr. Kagan calls for a national credential at both the associate's and bachelors level. Connecticut's ECTC would establish a first in the nation model for such a credential.

Raised Bill 275 reflects 3 years of work by many CT early childhood experts and the Departments of Higher Education and Education are committed to its implementation

Workforce Subcommittee

- In fall 2007 the Governor's Early Childhood Cabinet established a Workforce Subcommittee chaired by the Commissioner of the Department of Higher Education and the Director of the Office of Workforce Competitiveness.
- The membership included 50 representatives from state agencies, employers, higher education, and other philanthropic and advocacy organizations.
- In spring 2008 this Subcommittee presented the Cabinet with a plan to create a more highly qualified workforce in publicly funded early childhood programs.
- This plan called for 50/50 by 2015 and the ECTC (credential) and the group obtained the endorsements of both the Commissioners of Higher Education and Education for their proposal.

Standards Committee

- In fall 2008 the Commissioners of Higher Education and Education appointed a Standards Committee to develop the recommendations for implementing the recommendations of the Workforce Subcommittee (specifically the 50/50 and ECTC recommendations).
- The Standards Committee consisted of 23 members under the leadership of Doctors Merle Harris and Regina Miller.
- In June 2009 the Standards Committee presented the Commissioners and the Governor's Early Childhood Cabinet with:
 - Standards for the ECTC (credential) for both the associate's and bachelors levels;
 - Recommendations for approval process for higher education programs leading to the credential; and
 - An outline for Expedited and Alternative Pathways to enable those in the current workforce to earn the Credential
- One of the primary recommendations of the Standards Committee to move this work forward was to amend PA 05-245 to reflect the 50/50 standard for early childhood teachers in Connecticut.

DHE Commitment to the higher education approval process

The Department of Higher Education has agreed to work with the Department of Education to establish a process for approving higher education programs that prepare teachers to meet the early childhood competencies established by the Standards Committee.

**The Early Care and Education Teaching Workforce at the Fulcrum: An Agenda for Reform (2008)*